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South Dakota National Guard to Get Funding for Watertown Armory

PIERRE, S.D. – Funds for a new National Guard Armory at Watertown were approved by Congress last week in a measure that provides critical funding for the Department of Defense and other federal agencies for the rest of Fiscal Year 2011.

The \$26 million National Guard joint-use readiness center, an 80,000-square-foot complex, will be located on 30 acres of land about 1 mile from the current armory in Watertown. It will feature classrooms, administrative space, military vehicle parking and storage, as well as an auditorium. The building is designed to be very energy efficient and environmentally friendly, featuring a geothermal heat exchanger for heating and cooling.

“Never in the history of this great nation has the National Guard been better trained, better equipped or more heavily relied upon than it is today,” said Maj. Gen. Timothy A. Reisch, the Adjutant General for the South Dakota National Guard. “Ensuring that our units are fully trained and ready for mobilization is a huge responsibility. In order to do so, we must provide the best possible leadership, training areas, facilities and support.”

Planning for the new armory at Watertown began in 1995. Construction of an access road and extension of utilities to the new readiness center started last summer, with financial support of the state Legislature. The cost is nearly \$1.8 million, and the work is scheduled for completion this spring.

Thursday’s congressional funding measure will allow construction to begin this summer on the new readiness center, with completion in early 2013.

“Nearly half of our current armories are more than 40 years old,” Reisch said. “In fact, one-third of our armories are more than 50 years old. We must have the proper facilities and resources to meet the challenges of the future.”

The process of modernizing the state’s aging armories will take decades to complete. The final plan calls for six new regional readiness centers to be built with another six to ten “enduring armories” remaining in select communities across the state.

“Securing federal funding for new facilities has always been a challenge, and that is only expected to worsen in the years to come,” the Adjutant General said. “With the increased reliance on the today’s National Guard, we must do all we can to provide the best training environment possible.”

The current Watertown armory was built in 1958, and is nearing the end of its useful life.